

a good deal that goes on in schools under the name of science-teaching will thank Prof. Tait for this courageous utterance. The mischief is that school-teaching is dominated by examinations, and that the kind of science-teaching which it is possible, and highly desirable, to have in schools does not readily lend itself to examination-tests of the ordinary kind.

The volume is marked by the same beauty and accuracy of printing as the former one. It is intimated that a third volume will complete the work.

HORACE LAMB.

WYATT'S BRITISH BIRDS.

British Birds; with some Notes in reference to their Plumage. By C. W. Wyatt. Coloured Illustrations. (London: William Wesley and Son, 1899.)

WHETHER the beautifully illustrated work on the same subject by the late Lord Lilford leaves room for the present volume and its predecessor, is a question for the publisher rather than for the reviewer to answer; but, if the stream of books on the subject be any criterion, the appetite of the British public for natural histories of the avifauna of their own country seems insatiable. Apart from all this, the present work, of which the first volume was issued in 1897, has high claims on the consideration of the public, the large size (4to.) of the paper on which they are printed permitting the plates to be on a scale of greater magnitude than in the work above-mentioned, while their excellence from an artistic point of view, as well as their apparent fidelity to nature, leaves little or nothing to be desired from the point of view of the connoisseur in animal painting. In too many instances we have either an inartistic but truthful portrait of the creature depicted, or an artistic picture in which details of coloration are sacrificed to the general effect; but in the present case, the happy mean appears to have been attained in these respects. The plates are signed with the initials "C. W. W.," but we are told in the preface that the colouring has been done by the daughters of Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, whose training is a sufficient guarantee for its accuracy.

It must, indeed, be understood that the book stands or falls by the plates, as the letterpress is restricted in the main to details concerning the plumage of the specimens figured, or to generalities relating to seasonal changes of colour, nothing in the way of description being given.

When the scientific names applied to the different species are those of almost universal acceptance, no references to other works are added; but in the case of those where uniformity is by no means general, a reference is made to the synonyms used in standard manuals, such as the fourth edition of "Yarrell." It may be added that the reference to the latter work in the case of the Hen-Harrier appears to have been introduced by mistake, as the nomenclature employed is the same. As regards generic nomenclature, the author adopts a middle course, avoiding the inordinate "splitting" followed by some ornithologists, as he does the excessive "lumping" favoured by others.

The first volume was devoted to the resident Passeres of the British Islands, and as the present commences with

the migratory members of the same order, it will be evident that the author does not confine himself to a strictly systematic arrangement. In excluding the casual visitors, which, in our own opinion, have no right whatever to the title of British Birds, the author differs from the plan followed by some of his brother ornithologists, whose object seems to be to draw up as long a list as possible, without any regard to the facts of geographical distribution. The other groups included in this volume include the Picarians, Owls, Hawks, and Pigeons, so that the Game Birds, Waders, and Water-Birds alone remain for its successor.

As a handsome, and at the same time an accurate, series of volumes for the drawing-table, the work may be heartily commended to all bird-lovers with whom "money is no object."

R. L.

OUR BOOK SHELF.

Our Native [American] Birds, how to protect them, and attract them to our homes. By D. Lange. Pp. x + 162. (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1899.)

LEST our readers should be misled into thinking that the present little volume is but another item in the already large literature of British ornithology, we have ventured to indicate its birth-place by a bracketed interpolation in the title.

The author, to whom the love of birds is evidently second nature, starts with the assertion that, with the exception of a few counties, the number of song-birds has of late years been steadily decreasing in the United States, and then proceeds to consider in detail—firstly, how this unfortunate state of things has been brought about, and, secondly, how it may best be remedied. Nor are song-birds alone considered, a certain amount of space being devoted to game-birds (inclusive of the *Anatidae*), many of which have likewise suffered severely.

The fact of the decrease in the former group seems to rest on conclusive evidence; the main causes assigned being lack of suitable nesting-places, want of water and food, the abundance of cats (domestic and feral), the ravages committed by boys, collectors, and plume-hunters, the aggressive habits of the English sparrow, and the use of poison in gardens and farms.

As regards legislative protection, the author wisely leaves this to the various "Audubon Societies," which have been established in the States, and other suitable agencies; devoting his attention mainly how to supply to his feathered friends such objects as are essential to their well-being, and how to guard them from the attacks of their chief foes. As our readers are aware, many towns and villages in the States are located on the open prairie, where the absence of cover renders the birds especially liable to destruction; while even in districts more favoured by nature there seems to be a great tendency to make the gardens of residents as open and bare of shrubbery as possible. Old hollow trees, too, which form the nesting-places of so many species, have likewise been ruthlessly felled, so that the unhappy birds have literally no retreats wherein to hide.

Accordingly, the planting of trees, vines and shrubs (especially kinds which afford good cover and edible berries) is strongly urged, while beds of suitable kinds of flowers, such as gladioli, should be planted to attract humming-birds. For species building in hollow trees, nesting-boxes should be provided in suitable sites; while drinking and bathing vessels should be furnished in the dry season, and abundance of suitable food at all times. The noxious sparrow is to be hustled out of the usurped nesting-places, while coils of barbed wire, or suitable